

## THE WIDOW PEPPER'S TACTICS.

They Brought Quick Results In  
Two Love Affairs.

By HARRIET WHITNEY.

It was 7 o'clock Monday morning, and the smoke of Louizy Cottonwood's wash fire in the back yard was threading its blue haze into the fresh, early air.

Louizy's father, Lyman Cottonwood, striking out cross lots, lagged a little while he started his breakfast cob pipe. His gaze dwelt ruminatively upon the big ash hopper a few moments, then traveled back to the form of his daughter just appearing from the smokehouse with a tub in her arms.

"Louizy!"

The young woman turned her head around, set her tub upon a backless chair and came forward, her low, flat shoes patting softly over the short "goose grass." Her figure looked skimp in its blue calico washing gown; her locks were heavy in color and not too plentiful; she had gathered them up high and twisted them so tightly that the outer corners of her eyes were drawn upward like those of a Chinese woman.

"Louizy," said her father, leaning an elbow on a corner of the hopper, "I was goin' to tell you an' fergot; the Widder Pepper's a-comin' up today fer a basket of windfall Spy apples to make dumplin's, an' I gotter be at Harris' all day helpin' thrash. You show 'er where the good ones is at, an' don't you sass 'er none. You understand?"

"I ain't carin' how many Spy apples she gathers. Reckon apples wasn't the only thing you an' her was settlin' about yest' day evenin'."

"Well," Lyman looked off slantwise across the hopper—"I got 'er panned up es close es you ever kin pen a woman. The darned contrary birds won't never give you a square out 'yes' tell after the preacher's sent fer. But you kin count on havin' a stepma before pumpkins is ripe."

"I wouldn't think, then, paw"—Louizy's voice became mildly reproachful—"seem' how happy you're a-goin' to be, you'd begrudge me an' an'—an'—Sam?"

Her father came up from his lounging attitude with a jerk.

"Louizy Jane Cottonwood, how many times I gotter tell you that's diffrunt! Now, listen yere"—he ticked off his points with the forefinger of his right hand in the spread palm of the left—"I told you the what fers an' why sos yest' day, an' that's nuff said. An' now listen at this: Ef I don't find Sam Dorkins at Harris' thrashin' today it's a sign he's over yere, an' ef he is you'll see me back, an' you'll see me bounce Sam over the fence into the bresh quick enough to jolt his ears crooked. Now, mind what I've told you."

Louizy shed so many tears over her wash that morning that when the fat little Widow Pepper came with her basket she cast many sharply inquisitive glances at the red rings of the forlorn maiden's eyes.

"Looky here, Louizy Cottonwood," said she at length as the two trudged up to the orchard, "you ain't been actin' the baby 'cause your paw wants to marry ag'in, hev you?"

Louizy shook her head.

"I wouldn't care a speck if he married tomorrow if he'd have the manners to leave me an' Sam Dorkins alone."

"Humph!" said the widow. "Whut's he layin' up against Sam?"

"Nothin' particler, but he 'lows there's no sense of me a-marryin' fer half a dozen years or so. He's countin' on takin' a lot of city folks to board of summers after you an' him air married, an' he says two women'll be needed to cook fer 'em."

"Well, I say," Mrs. Phebe Pepper brought the exclamation out with a chop. Then she stopped in the path and laughed with a heartiness that threatened to break her apron strings. Mrs. Pepper was short and wide, and her little round, dark face expressed a mixture of good nature, shrewdness and obstinacy.

"He's a curious old plant, your paw," said she, "but I've jist got this to say: Ef any man o' mine ever takes any summer boarders he'll do the cookin' or else he'll hire it done."

Louizy shook her head dissentingly.

"You'll think different when paw gets you."

"He ain't got me yit," said the widow cheerfully. "Looky here, Louizy, how old air you?"

"Thirty-three," confessed Louizy, with a slight blush.

"The law me! An' you're scared to marry without your paw says you kin?"

The blush widened, taking in Louizy's ears.

"You don't know paw," said she dimly.

"Couldn't more than kill you, could he?"

"Some folks' tongues is worse than killin'."

The widow trudged forward in silent self communion, which lasted until they reached the Northern Spy apple tree. Louizy began to fill the basket with the bright streaked windfalls, but Mrs. Pepper plumped herself down comfortably into the clover.

"Sam Dorkins is goin' on forty," said she meditatively. "He's a sight nigher to my age than yours."

Louizy paused suddenly in her task and looked questioning at the widow.

"Oh, I was jist a-thinkin'," the latter observed carelessly, biting jauntily into a big apple. "Me an' Sam was allers

good friends. Better stop now, Louizy. That's many es I kin pack."

Lyman Cottonwood was in the narrow lane between his turnip field and his tobacco patch stopping a gap in the fence when a thudding of feet on the mellow earth drew his attention. A broad shouldered fellow was swinging briskly along with an ax on his shoulder.

"Hello, Unc' Lym!" he hailed cheerfully.

"Here, you, Sam Dorkins!" Lyman barred his way with belligerent elbows. "This yere lane's a private one, ef you want to know it, an' you's gotter keep 'way from Louizy Cottonwood whether you want to know it or not."

"I ain't a-goin' to tote the lane off with me, ner Louizy either. I wasn't aimin' to stop yere. Didn't know es I'd spile the lane goin' through it to the Widder Pepper's."

"Widder Pepper's?" bawled Lyman frantically. "Whut business you got anywhere nigh the Widder Pepper?"

"Come, now, Uncle Lym," grinned Sam; "don't hev a fit. Reckon I kin go chop a little stove wood fer a good lookin' widder without you foppin' up like a skynocket. I've knowed the widder a-many a year."

"I don't care a cent taked turnip seed whut you've knowed," foamed Lyman. "The widder kin git stove wood without you a-cuttin' it. You take an' let that widder alone er you shuck off yer coat an' watch out fer me."

"Sure now," returned Sam, "you know I'm a younger man 'n you, Uncle Lym. Better not be too biggity. You may think you're the only speckled bean in the hill, but widders is notionated an' kin fly about tother way es easy es a flapjack. An' the country's free, es I've heard say. There's no statute that says two men shan't spark one widder, an' I reckon my chances is good es yours ef I choose to stake 'em right hearty. You kin fence me off from Louizy, but you can't fence me off from the widder."

"I kin send you flyin' over them rails," declared Lyman wrathfully.

"Well, now, I ain't right shore it'd be good policy to tackle the job," said Sam argumentatively. "You got right smart of rheumatiz, ye know, Uncle Lym. Ye might pitch me over an' ye mightn't. Now, I'll tell you whut. The widders in need of stove wood. I shall go there an' cut it fer her an' stay to supper 'r else I'll loan you my ax an' leave you go cut the wood fer her, an' I'll go in an' talk to Louizy a spell. Which'll it be?"

Lyman leaned against the rail fence, his brain whizzing with new battery ideas. The desirability of the widow had increased tenfold since this bold rival had proclaimed himself so determinedly. What was Louizy in comparison? The ideas came to a focus. He stepped forward resolutely.

"Han' over the ax," he said briefly, "an' go long in Louizy's ironin'. You an' her kin be es big fools es you want."

When Mrs. Phebe Pepper, looking from her doorway, saw Mr. Lyman Cottonwood coming up the walk with Sam's ax on his shoulder her black eyes sparkled with fun.

"I loved that would fetch Lym of Sam worked it all right," she said to herself, with a smothered chuckle, "an' mighty lucky thing fer Louizy Cottonwood her future stepmaw's got a leetle grain o' gumption, seem' Louizy don't know no more 'n a goslin' how to tend to her own love affairs."

### The Woman and the Serpent.

P. T. Barnum and his wife were very fond of the gifted sisters Alice and Phoebe Cary, who often visited them at Bridgeport. To a friend the famous showman once remarked: "Alice was the more thoughtful, while Phoebe was always bubbling over with good spirits and wit. I never knew a brighter woman. One day I was taking her and some friends through my museum. At the head of the stairs was the cage containing the happy family, which included owls, cats, mice, serpents and other creatures generally mortal enemies, but all living in perfect harmony, mainly because we kept them so stuffed with food that they had no temptation to prey on one another. The cage stood directly at the head of the stairs, and just as we reached the top a big serpent stretched its head toward Phoebe. Forgetting the glass that separated them, she was so startled that she uttered a scream and would have fallen backward down the steps had I not caught her. Looking up to me, she said: 'Thank you, Mr. Barnum! But remember that I am not the first woman that the serpent has caused to fall.'"

### An Infantile Composite.

"Well, really, I can't say that I think that he looks just like any one in particular," said the mother of Master George Herbert Sanderson Spriggins, four weeks old, to a caller who was having the privilege of seeing George Herbert Sanderson Spriggins for the first time. "I don't think that he has his father's chin, and his nose is just like my father's, and his eyes remind me of my sister Helen's. The shape of his face is a good deal like his father's brother Joe's, and sometimes when he laughs he reminds me of my brother Ted. Often when he is asleep I think that he resembles my uncle George, and again he has a way of half closing his eyes that makes me think of his grandfather Spriggins. I think he is growing to look more like my side of the house excepting for the upper part of his face, and that reminds me of his father's family. Still, I can't say that he really looks just like any one but himself unless it is my sister Eva's little boy. Strange how family resemblances crop out in mere babies, isn't it?"—Pittsburgh Chronicle-Telegraph.

## Are Playgrounds a Good Investment?

When any organization asks the public for financial support, the business men are naturally anxious to know whether or not they are getting a fair return for the money they put into that organization. The above question has been asked in all seriousness by some and in other ways to me on more than one occasion, and I know there are many who have asked themselves the question who would like to be informed on the subject. To all such, from whatever motive they are led to seek information I beg leave to submit the following:

Children are better in playgrounds than in prison. It is better for the community to have the children exercising on ladders, horizontal bars and swings, than to have them haunting

do contend that children are like men in many respects, and must have some way in which to work off their surplus stored up energy. If they are provided with games of a wholesome innocent character under proper supervision and influence they can work off this energy to their benefit and without annoyance or injury to the community. There are other ways for them to do this, but aside from work none has been found to equal the playground. As soon as one is found which is superior we will adopt it not only in Newport News but throughout the entire country.

So many have expressed to us their approval of the work as carried on last year and have told us it would be the grossest injustice not only against the children, but against our



Smith.

the doors of pool rooms or smoking cigarettes in the hidden shadows. Children with plenty of playgrounds have a better chance with life than children without. Most children are without unless the community provides them. It is cheaper to amuse than to arrest. It is cheaper to develop than to sink them, and it is infinitely better.

No one will take issue on any of the above points, and I am sure most will concede the correctness of the several statements made. Some will argue that it is not necessary to have playgrounds in so small a place as Newport News, that they are all right for the children of the large cities but not necessary here. Wherein do the children of Newport News differ from the children of our great cities? Why are playgrounds necessary and beneficial there but not here? In several cities, some not any larger than Newport where juvenile crime, most of it of a minor nature confined almost exclusively to misdemeanors, reached such proportions that special courts were created to handle juvenile cases only, and where they employ probation and truant officers and are in a position to state authoritatively from the carefully kept records which they have spent years in compiling, that juvenile crime, truancy and delinquency have decreased as playgrounds increased.

Of course I do not mean to contend that unless children have playgrounds they will haunt pool rooms, smoke cigarettes or commit petty crimes. I

elves if we failed to carry on the work again this year, we have decided to undertake the task again not only the supervision but also the financing. It is to be hoped that our "city fathers" will provide the financial support for this work and that in future years we will not have to resort to private soliciting for a public institution. We will continue to carry on this work as long as the generous public spirited citizens who have expressed the above mentioned sentiments support us.

Taking the question of whether the playgrounds are a good investment from a narrow financial viewpoint alone and one is bound to answer in the affirmative, or taking it from the broader standpoint of mental, physical and moral culture, attained by those using the grounds and one is forced to answer the same way.

Now for a few figures to substantiate my argument that playgrounds are a paying investment and pay well.

Visits to playgrounds last season, 45,000.

Amount expended for maintenance less than \$600.

Cost per visit per child less than 11.3 cents.

The board of managers is open to suggestions of ways and means of making the grounds more efficient and of maintaining them more economical. To all those who think the grounds were a failure last season or were to extravagantly conducted, we again invite your attention to the above figures and urge your criticism and suggestion.

EUGENE G. KING.

## Longest Lawsuit Saloons in New York

THE concluding statement has just been made of the longest lawsuit in the world, which has been pending in the courts of Mexico for the past three hundred and forty years. The suit was over the boundary line between two towns, Yodocome and Munn, and both towns held titles to the same land, the conflicting grants being made by the colonial government. The titles of private properties were also involved.

The suit dragged on for the first hundred years, several legal steps passed and still the suit was unsettled. All during this time the residents of both cities were arrayed against each other, and many conflicts have taken place since the matter was first brought to the eyes of the Mexican courts. The matter was finally laid before the people of the two towns, and, after many conferences, a settlement of the case was reached, and the suit in court was formally dismissed. President Diaz had a hand in the settlement, being a native of the town of Yodocome.

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### Status of the Snail.

In France the Minister of Agriculture has made a careful examination of the subject of snails and has established a "legal status of the snail." He has issued a circular stating that snails are to be defined as animals injurious to vegetation, and therefore legally subject to capture and destruction at all times. Snails are one of the favorite dishes for the table in France. In the winter of 1907 the consumption of the delicate food amounted to 800 tons, but since that time the amount has diminished. Eighty million snails are received annually by the Halles Centrales, the greatest market in Paris.

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